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TAGS: PREL PHUM EUN NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/TURKEY: ACCESION DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT
BLEAK

REF: A. STATE 195044

1B. DEC 5 E-MAIL "POLITICS IN THE NETHERLANDS" (NOTAL)

Classified By: DCM Chat Blakeman; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. Summary: (SBU) The GONL supports the goal of Turkish accession but continues to insist that the Turks meet their obligations, particularly the opening of northern Cypriot ports. The GONL is fighting to avoid a formal suspension of, or an outright deadline for ending, accession negotiations. An ongoing parliamentary debate, however, does not bode well.
End summary.

12. (U) Poloff delivered reftel demarche December 5 to MFA Deputy European Correspondent Jeroen Boender. Boender promised to have a thorough look at the document later but offered immediate comment on Turkish accession.

Dutch Parliamentary debate bodes poorly for Turks

13. (C) Parliament held the first of two debates on Turkish accession December 6. The second debate is expected December 7 or 8. Foreign Minister Bot on December 4 sent Parliament a letter explaining the Government's position (ref B). He called for adhering to the conditions laid out in the accession negotiations and twice emphasized that this would result in de facto suspension of accession negotiations on some chapters. He added that the GONL favored linking more than eight chapters to the opening of northern Cypriot ports. Boender explained that Bot hoped, by calling for a firm EU stance, he could outmaneuver Parliamentarians bent on formally suspending negotiations or setting a final deadline for Turkish compliance.

14. (C) The December 6 debate appears to have gone poorly. Junior coalition partner VVD (the conservative Liberals) all but abandoned the Government, with VVD foreign policy spokesman Hans van Baalen calling for a suspension on the opening of negotiations on any new chapters. Only opposition parties Green Left and D-66 supported the Government's position. The Socialists called for a complete freeze on negotiations.

15. (C) PvdA (Labor) took a more moderate approach, saying that the Netherlands should not take a tougher line than Cyprus or Greece. Labor foreign policy spokesman Bert Koenders agreed with Bot that the EU, including Cyprus and Greece, must do more to make negotiations work. He was clear, however, that Labor wanted Turkey to be held accountable for failure to meet its obligations.

Parliament may consider tough resolution

16. (C) A second debate will take place December 7 or 8 and will open the way for Parliament to vote on a resolution.

According to Boender, the resolution will likely be at least as tough as Parliament's resolution last year, which called for an immediate suspension of negotiations should Turkey fail to implement the Ankara protocol by the end of 2006. A resolution would not bind the caretaker Government, and its impact might well depend on the composition of the next Government.

17. (C) Parliament could, as an alternative, call for a date certain for full Turkish compliance. Mark Rutte, leader of VVD had suggested shortly before the November 22 national elections that the Turks be given two years, after which negotiations would be permanently halted. Bot is still hoping to avoid this, despite the announcement by Germany and France that they will seek an 18-month deadline.

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